THE HUNDRED DAYS:

ATLANTA MUNICIPAL THEATRE, INC.

IN THE

ATLANTA MEMORIAL ARTS CENTER

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May, 1969

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Introduction

On October 28, 1968, a $100-ticket, black-tie gala ushered in the Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., as a tenant in the new $13 million Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. For the inaugural event, AMT presented the North American premiere of King Arthur, a 17th century masque with libretto by John Dryden and music by Henry Purcell. The masque allowed the producing organization to introduce simultaneously three performing companies under its managerial leadership--the Atlanta Repertory Theater, the Atlanta Opera Company, and the Atlanta Ballet Company. The national and local fanfare which attended the evening was estimated by a local advertising magnate as representing at least $2 million in free publicity for Atlanta Municipal Theater, the Atlanta Arts Center, the city, and the state. In one of many congratulatory speeches heaped upon AMT at the opening fete, the mayor of Atlanta, Ivan Allen, Jr., proclaimed, "The city has come of age in the performing arts."[1]

On January 14, 1969, eleven weeks later, AMT general manager Christopher B. Manos announced that Atlanta Municipal Theater was at an end. The corporation, unable to meet its financial obligations, was over $600,000 in debt and had not paid many of its administrative staff since December 31, 1968.

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[1] Diane Thomas, "Alliance Theater's Opening A Stunner," Atlanta Constitution, October 29, 1968, p. 1.

Camelot was crumbling. Cultural Atlanta reeled with the shock. Business Atlanta braced itself for an unanticipated loss of face. Communities throughout the country paused to take a sober reckoning of their own potential cultural assets and liabilities. "Other cities are no longer saying, 'If Atlanta can do it, so can we,' but are asking themselves, 'If Atlanta can't do it, how can we?'" wrote one commentator.[2]

The closing of the Atlanta Municipal Theater struck a blow felt by the entire regional theater movement. One weekly news magazine termed it symptomatic of a "Culture Shock;"[3] another lamented the "High Cost of Culture" in Atlanta and elsewhere;[4] syndicated news services spread the warning to any community even remotely considering construction of a performing arts center.

Manos had had great faith in his idea of a central agency to administer several performing groups. He had promoted his "umbrella concept" before the national press at the opening of Arthur, and almost without exception writers had mentioned AMT as the first producing organization in the arts to shelter ballet, opera, adult and children's theater groups under its supervision. It is unfortunate that the possibilities for cross-fertilization among the various art forms had

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[2]Edwin Howard, "From Camelot to Catastrophe--II," Memphis Press-Scimitar, January 21, 1969, p. 43.

[3]"Culture Shock: Financial Troubles," Newsweek, LXIII, January 27, 1969, pp. 94-95.

[4]"The High Cost of Culture," Time, XCIII, January 24, 1969, p. 59.

to die with AMT. The concept was not responsible for the demise of the combine, except in so far as it facilitated AMT's entrance into the Arts Center in the first place.

The fall of Atlanta Municipal Theater cannot, in fact, be laid to any single factor. This investigation unearthed no villian. Naivete, inexperience, misplaced faith, mismanagement, and the human desire to look after one's own interests were the gravest errors of the prinicpals involved. The fault spreads thinly over a wide area: an Arts Alliance unwilling to increase its deficit by including the Atlanta Mumicipal Theater in its fund-raising campaign; an AMT management triumvirate unwilling to delegate authority; a local foundation which gave money, but remained aloof from policy matters, as it felt a foundation should; visionary artistic directors who underestimated the provincialism of the Southern middle class which would make up their audiences; a board of directors too trusting and insufficiently seasoned to question managerial decisions; a general manager who thought he was building an audience for serious theater by giving them star-studded musicals.

The ideal of a center housing all the visual and performing arts under one roof was exciting, venturesome, and, I believe, realizable. Its implementation was fraught with human error from top to bottom, from foundation heads to box office personnel. The history that follows is virtually a "how not to" guide in establishing a resident professional performing situation.

I. Atlanta Municipal Theater and the Cultural Center Idea

"Methought I heard some Civic Leader say,
'Would that some friendly Breeze would blow our way
(Now that we've coped with Hookworm and Erosion)
Some Fallout from the Cultural Explosion!'
Men tell of an Alliance in the South
Who'll put their Money where they put their Mouth.
We got the Culture if they got the Loot,
And Rumor says they have. Come, Sir, let's to't!
But Pardon, Gentles all, that I have dared
To leave your dear illusions thus unspared,
To say that it must be as well as seem
That more than Dreaming goes to build a Dream. . ."

--Excerpt from Prologue commissioned by the Atlanta Municipal Theater from John Lewin for the opening of King Arthur, October 28, 1968.

The Atlanta Municipal Theater came to take its position in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center as an organization seasoned by fifteen years of theater producing in Atlanta, a close association with the city fathers, and at least one baptism by fire. Outsiders had high hopes for its operations in the Center. Christopher Manos, who had headed the group since 1960, had elicited from his board of directors an unquestioning faith. Others, who were skeptical of this often deeply emotional man with his rare energy and big dreams, found their reservations swept aside by repeated testimonials that "Chris could sell ice to the Eskimoes."

The history of Atlanta Municipal Theater, largely that of Manos' drive for a multi-faceted producing organization, forms, along with the growth of the cultural center concept in Atlanta, a context essential to the understanding of At-

lanta Municipal Theater's position in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center and in the community and of the circumstances which forced the organization to an early end.

1. Summer Musicals and Financial Losses

In 1953, Atlanta's mayor, William B. Hartsfield, formed Municipal Theater, Inc., a nonprofit extension of the city's Parks and Recreation Department, to present a summer season of "light opera" at the Chastain Park Amphitheater. The WPA had built the 6,000-seat stone bowl in 1937. Save for an unsuccessful venture in 1947 by a group called the "Moonlight Opera Company," it had seen little use. There had been talk of filling it for a swimming pool. Municipal Theater elected officers, hired a part-time producer-director, and gave Atlantans Theater Under the Stars, a summer season of six musicals running a week each, with second-string New York performers in the leads, a lot of aspiring local talent in the choruses, and tickets ranging from twenty-five cents to two dollars.

After breaking even for two years, TUTS dived determinedly into the red and stayed there, despite uniformly favorable reviews from a lenient local press and increased participation by civic leaders in the sale of season subscriptions. Not even the employment of second-rank "name" stars (Such as Shirl Conway of television's "Sid Caesar Show" and the popular singer Betty Johnson) for the 1957 and 1959 seasons could curb the losses. The shows were playing to 20 per cent of capacity. After the 1959 season, it was announced that Theater Under the Stars faced extinction unless civic and business

leaders agreed to underwrite it. Support was obtained and in 1960 Christopher B. Manos was hired as executive producer and given a yearly budget of $110,000.

2. Manos, the Star System, and Commercial Success

Manos came to Municipal from California's Pasadena Playhouse and from the New York Theatre Guild, where he had worked as a producer. He had recently married a prominent Atlanta girl and they had decided to settle in the city.

In January, 1961, Manos announced that Municipal Theater had signed the Metropolitan Opera singer Blanche Thebom to play Anna in The King And I. An Atlanta businessman was financing her artistry. This was Manos' first experiment with the "star system" in Atlanta, which he was to champion for popular theater operations with the fervor he was later to devote to the umbrella concept of management in resident professional theater.

Miss Thebom proved an excellent risk. The Metropolitan Opera makes a one-week touring stop in Atlanta annually, affording residents an excuse for a week which has become the high point on the local and regional social calendar. Miss Thebom had appeared in Atlanta with the Met in 1959 and she brought with her to Theater Under the Stars the aura of an occasion. With tickets at a dollar minimum, the house was packed. Reviewers raved, the show sold out for the remainder

of the week and, although there were no big names in the other productions, attendance remained high. For the first time since 1954, Theater Under the Stars ended the season with a surplus. Manos converted entirely to the star system for the 1962 TUTS season, retaining his one dollar ticket minimum. By 1964, he had paid off the $236,000 running deficit TUTS had sustained for several years prior to his arrival. To his board of directors, he had performed a financial miracle, earning from them a trust which was to carry him into the Arts Center and on to catastrophe.

3. The City Plans A Performing Arts Center

By 1961, resident professional theaters were springing up across the country. Dallas, Houston, Washington and San Francisco had fairly well established companies. Other cities were following suit, many planning to house their cultural displays in new "centers for the performing arts."

Atlanta had always considered itself forward-looking and residents took pride in the city's ability to stay abreast of the times, in contrast to many of its smaller Southern sister cities. With a population of close to one million and the first thrust of a building boom that is still in progress, Atlanta could afford to turn to luxuries. The city fathers took a look at local cultural facilities and found them wanting. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra was

homeless, playing its winter series of concerts in the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium, a 5,500-seat fin de siecle building combining the structural comforts of a barn with the acoustical attributes of an echo chamber. Professional theater was not even a gleam in the amateur eye. Theatre Atlanta, the town's reigning civic group, gave four plays a year in the auditorium of the Atlanta Women's Club and conducted rehearsals three blocks away in a drafty building belonging to the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Clearly the performing arts in Atlanta needed a home. Other cities were building new centers, and it was felt Atlanta should have one, too. It would be good for the arts, good for the city's image, and hence, good for attracting new industry.

Mayor Hartsfield requested from the city's planning division guidelines for a structure which might best suit the needs of the city and the existing performing groups. The report, which sought the advice of local architects and national theater consultants, was submitted to Hartsfield in May, 1961. It called for a hall seating over two thousand for the Symphony and a smaller auditorium for drama, plus dressing rooms, a scene shop, and other related facilities. The center's board of directors would represent the city, the performing organizations, and local patrons of the arts. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and a resident professional theater company were recommended as permanent residents of the building. Although the construction costs might necessitate a fund drive or an endowment fund, the report stated,

the operating costs could be defrayed by renting the halls to touring groups when they were not in use by local organizations.[5] The suggested location, Piedmont Park, scene of a yearly outdoor visual "Arts Festival," rund the length of five city blocks and occupies the center of an old residential neighborhood then undergoing a transition from elegance to genteel seediness. The center was viewed as one way of stabilizing the property. Partial funds for construction would be obtained through a city bond issue.

The bulk of the construction money had been put up by the local Emily and Ernest Woodruff Foundation, begun by a past president of Coca-Cola, Inc. The Woodruff Foundation gives capital grants to Atlanta projects with potential regional significance, on the condition that the donor remain anonymous, a proviso respected by the Atlanta press but few others. Dr. Phillip Weltner, then its administrator, had felt for some time that the foundation should get into the arts. So $4 million for the arts center was put up by the Woodruff Foundation on the condition that an additional $2 million were raised and one board was elected to govern all the cultural activities in the building.

As soon as architectural plans for the center were released, Weltner requested from Manos, successfully operating in TUTS the city's only professional theater company, a

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[5]"A Report on a Community Center for the Performing Arts," prepared at the request of William B. Hartsfield, Mayor, by the Planning Division, City of Atlanta, Department of Planning, May 22, 1961, pp. 4-14.

study of the manpower needed to run the building. Two of the three theaters planned by the architects, Toombs, Amisano, and Wells, would become primarily booking houses for visiting shows, Manos decided, while the third would be filled by an organization simultaneously producing professional theater, opera, and ballet. The third theater would then be used Wednesdays through Sundays by the permanent theater company which would present fifteen plays, each running two weeks, giving no matinees, but two evening performances on Fridays and Saturdays. The ballet and opera companies would each use the theater for productions one Monday and one Tuesday night per month. The two remaining Tuesdays would go for dress rehearsals for the theater company, leaving two Monday nights per month free for bookings. The theater company would have ten professional actors; the opera, eight principals, a ten-member chorus, and five musicians; and the ballet company, ten principal dancers, a ten-girl corps de ballet, and five musicians.[6*]

The Foundation liked Manos' plan. His place in the cen-

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[6] "Report for a Cultural Center, submitted by Christopher B. Manos, Executive Director, Theater Under the Stars, at the request of Dr. Phillip Weltner and with the approval of Maurice B. Seltzer, President, Theater Under the Stars, 1961, pp. 6-17.

*This was essentially the program which Manos was to implement on a larger scale in 1968. Then, however, he scheduled six plays for a month each, thus eliminating one dress rehearsal per month; dropped the Friday early evening performance; added to his opera and ballet schedules a weekly Wednesday matinee and an extra Monday and Tuesday night performance per month.

ter as head of the producing company he had described seemed assured. Then politics took over.

Mayor Hartsfield, after twenty-four years in office, declined to run again in 1961. When the smoke cleared from the November mayoralty race, Atlantans discovered, no doubt to their surprise, that in this era of school integrations and lunch-counter sit-ins, they had elected Ivan Allen, Jr., a man more moderate (or "liberal") than Hartsfield.

The bond issue which would raise the $2 million for the performing arts center, in addition to assorted sums for educational facilities and sewage construction, came close on the heels of Allen's election, in early 1962. It was defeated by almost four to one. The conservative backlash had rejected the arts center, which would have been integrated, as "something else for Mayor Allen's Niggers." Hartsfield acknowledged the killing off of what had been to a large extent his brain child with the reported declaration that "Any idea for a home for the arts in Atlanta is dead, dead, dead."[7]

4. A Building Born of Tragedy

In the early morning of June 2, 1962, a chartered Air France plane crashed on take-off at Orly Field outside Paris, and 113 of Atlanta's most prominent patrons of the arts met

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[7] George Goodwin, vice president, Atlanta Arts Alliance, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, March 6, 1969.

their deaths. Their hopes for an arts center having been temporarily scotched, they had gone to seek their cultural diversion abroad on a tour of European museums. They were returning home when their plane crashed on take-off.

Amid the ensuing shock, sorrow, and confusion, remaining Atlanta art lovers hastily established a memorial fund. James V. Carmichael, chairman of the Atlanta Art Association, which included the Atlanta School of Art and the High Museum of Art (named for Mrs. Joseph M. High, who had donated her home to the Art Association in 1926), stipulated that the funds were to "be used exclusively for the Art Association and not for a center for the performing arts."[8] Plans were to build an art school facility.

When the fund quickly grew to $50,000, the Art Association yielded to requests from supporters of the performing arts, some from their membership. The Woodruff Foundation was approached by the combined boards of the Atlanta Art Association and the Atlanta Symphony Guild with the proposal that a center could be built to encompass the existing museum building as well as house a school, provide a hall for the symphony, and a smaller theater which could either house a resident professional theater company or be rented by existing amateur groups for a nominal fee. The Foundation, which still wanted to get into the arts and liked the idea of several arts

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[8]Raleigh Bryans, "Art Association Sets Up Fund for Atlantans Killed in Crash," Atlanta Journal, June 5, 1962, p. 1.

under one roof, renewed its offer of $4 million, again on condition that another $2 million be raised in the community.

Richard H. Rich, president of a large local department store chain, was chosen to head the fund drive.* With Rich at the helm, not $2 million, but $4 million were raised and bids were invited for the construction of an $8 million Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center, The single building was to incorporate the existing museum and the Walter Hill Auditorium and contain, in addition, an 1,800-seat Symphony Hall and an 800-seat theater for drama, with space for an art school, library, and administrative offices on the top two floors.

When the bids came in, the fund raisers discovered that the facility they had envisioned would cost, at the lowest estimate, $13 million, Members of the Atlanta Symphony Guild and the Atlanta Art Association then joined forces as the Atlanta Arts Alliance. With the fresh impetus that came with the news that Robert Shaw had been signed to conduct the Symphony and would arrive for the 1967-68 season, they again approached the Woodruff Foundation, which gave $2,500,000, and the community, which managed to raise a further $1,250,000 in accordance with the provision of the Woodruff grant. In late 1966, the Callaway Foundation, another Georgia organization, contributed a final million needed unexpectedly. Ground was broken for the cultural center on

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*Rich"s support of the arts went beyond that of a patron. His daughter is married to Robert Barnett, artistic director of the Atlanta Ballet Company, and the couple is among the company's lead dancers.

June 3, 1966, the fourth anniversary of the Orly crash. The building was to be completed by September, 1968.

5. Manos Bids for A Home in the Center

The Arts Alliance was two years behind schedule with the Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center, but Manos and the Atlanta Municipal Theater were right on target.

Having set attendance records at Theater Under the Stars with his "star system" policy, Manos was ready to expand operations. In January, 1964, he presented a six-week season of winter stock (also on the star system), of "recent Broadway hits not yet staged in Atlanta and popular favorites deserving of revival."[9] Performances would be given Tuesday through Sunday evenings in the Women's Club Playhouse. The first season included The Seven Year Itch, Bus Stop, Sabrina Fair, Kind Sir, and Father of the Bride. Bert Parks, Julia Meade, John Forsythe, and Joe E. Brown were among the stars signed for the shows. Michael Howard staged the first three plays. A member of the Actor's Studio and an acting instructor at Columbia University and the High School for the Performing Arts, Howard had directed such luminaries as Charlton Heston, Edward Everett Horton, Celeste Holme, Joan Blondell, amd Ruth White, and had collaborated with Manos before the

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[9] Sam Lucchese, "Municipal Names Plays, Stars," Atlanta Journal, September 15, 1963, p. 49.

latter arrived in Atlanta on a touring production of Here Today, starring Jan Sterling.

The season was a success, playing to 70 per cent of capacity, and winter stock productions became a permanent part of Municipal Theater. MAnos was ready for his next step--a "Grand Opera in the Park," to follow that summer's Theater Under the Stars. The single performance of La Traviata, starring Robert Merrill, Richard Tucker, and Dorothy Kirsten, would have had to play to a full house to break even on its $30,000 expenditure. The production actually lost $1,300, but another record turnout at TUTS was more than sufficient to erase the deficit.

The 1965 Winter Play Season, for which Howard returned to direct Gigi, Bell, Book, and Candle, and Once More With Feeling, ran at one point for thirteen performances without an empty seat in the 700-seat house. Mary, Mary drew best, playing to 101 per cent of capacity.

With a $50,000 surplus on hand, Manos was ready to take his giant step. He approached the Atlanta Arts Alliance in February, 1965, proposing to rent the 868-seat Alliance Theater and produce the shows to fill it. He suggested a season of eight "fine plays" to run four weeks apiece, followed by six popular plays, each running a week. The "fine plays" would be presented by a permanent professional company, headed by a nationally known artistic director. The popular plays would be offered on the star system, as in the Winter Play Season. He also spoke of the formation of year-round

professional ballet and opera companies to give single performances on the theater company's dark nights.

The Alliance accepted Manos' proposition, making it public in August, 1965, that Municipal Theater would become a tenant in the Cultural Center. Manos had come with a $50,000 surplus, and the rent was set at $50,000. The Alliance suggested, moreover, that between then and the Center's completion date, Manos experiment with producing opera, ballet, and "fine plays" to determine the cost and be sure he could implement his plan.

Manos and the Alliance rode out arguments from competing theater groups and interested citizens that Municipal had specialized in offering only "lightweight entertainment with television stars il the leads, which it has produced hastily and publicized mightily."[10] An artistic director of "international stature"[11] was being sought for the theater company, Manos said. He further maintained that Municipal, as the only truly professional group operating in the city, was the only one qualified to go into the Center.

The following year brought another successful Theater Under the Stars season and an expanded Grand Opera in the

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[10] Milton Chaiken, member of the board of directors, Theatre Atlanta, in "Letters to the Editor." Atlanta Journal, August 14, 1965, p. 22.

[11] Terry Kay, "Director Sought for Center's Theater Company," Atlanta Journal and Constitution, December 12, 1965, p. D-8.

Park, which gave Atlanta audiences two operas--Madam Butterfly, starring Gabriella Tucci, and Carmen, with Richard Tucker and Beverly Wolfe--and Municipal's first ballet, the American premiere of Swan Lake with the complete Ivanov-Petipa choreography. David Blair of the Royal Ballet of London was hired to stage the production. He and his wife, Maryon Lane, would serve as its principal dancers.

Swan Lake was a sell-out and won national press coverage. Nonetheless, Grand Opera in the Park for 1965 incurred a $20,000 deficit on a $100,000 budget. Since each production was performed only once, ticket sales could not defray production costs, despite high attendance at the two operas. But Manos was not dismayed. The Winter Play Season and Theater Under the Stars surpluses would absorb it. He began to build up his administrative staff for the move into the Center, and he undertook another experiment--a six-week season of three "fine plays" to begin in October, 1965. Romeo and Juliet, Saint Joan, and Death of A Salesman were scheduled. Unlike Theater Under the Stars and the Winter Play Season, the Fine Play Season, as it was to be called, would employ no "names," but would use instead a "highly talented professional resident company" of some thirty persons bo be hired for the entire six weeks. Michael Howard would direct.[12]

In September, ticket sales for the Fine Play Season

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[12]Terry Kay, "Municipal To Do Fine Plays," Atlanta Journal, April 18, 1965, p. 19.

began with the word that its presentation would "fulfill Municipal Theater's long-range goal of presenting all forms of the performing arts" and that plans were "already underway for expansion of the Fine Play Season into a full forty weeks of plays."[13]

The season was a disaster. The production received mixed reviews from generally lenient Atlanta critics and played to only 32 per cent of capacity. AMT officials to this day will not release any further figures on it, describing it simply as a "tremendous loss."[14] Manos, undaunted, laid its failure entirely to insufficient promotion and still terms his offerings "the best theater this town has ever seen."[15] But the Fine Play Season provided storm warnings which should have been heeded before the move into the Arts Center.

Manos, fortunately, had another bumper Winter Play Season, which allowed him to absorb part of his Fine Play losses, and in April Municipal Theater merged with the 37-year-old Atlanta Civic Ballet and set about transforming that group into a professional company. The acquisition of the ballet, Manos said, would enable Municipal Theater to present more professional theater, ballet, and opera than any organization in the country was doing, with the exception of Lincoln Cen-

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[13] Tom Gray, "Municipal Plans Permanent Fine Plays," Atlanta Constitution, September 13, 1965, p. 19.

[14] Robert Ferst, president, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., interview in Atlanta, Georgia, April 3, 1969.

[15] Christopher B. Manos, executive director, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., interview in Atlanta, Georgia, February 6, 1969.

ter.[16]

The 1966 Theater Under the Stars season was followed by *Tosca* and the return of David Blair and Maryon Lane, this time in the first American *Sleeping Beauty* to employ the complete Petipa choreography. TUTS attendance was up from the previous year and Grand Opera in the Park broke even. Manos began putting out feelers for foundation assistance for his move into the Center, meanwhile producing a Christmas *Nutcracker* with the Atlanta Civic Ballet and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, a marriage which he hoped would carry over into the cultural center. In early 1967, he approached Woodruff for assistance and was told by Boisfelleut Jones, who had succeeded Weltner as foundation administrator, that he must first have a "responsible governing board" before he could expect help from the community.[17] Manos left Woodruff and set about finding himself a "responsible governing board."*

In June, 1967, Blanche Thebom was signed as artistic director of AMT's newly formed Atlanta Opera Company, which would reside in the Center, sharing the Alliance Theater with the Atlanta Ballet Company and the yet unformed Atlanta Rep-

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[17] Boisfelleut Jones, administrator, the Emily and Ernest Woodruff Foundation, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, April 3, 1969.

* Municipal Theater's board had not grown since the early Theater Under the Stars days. Before Manos' arrival in 1960 and TUTS' progress into the black, the company's deficits had been picked up by its president, Maurice B. Seltzer, who had died in 1963.

ertory theater. Shortly thereafter, it was announced that David Blair would head the ballet company, bringing along his wife, Maryon Lane. Michael Howard, who had had a commercial, if not a critical, success with Marat/Sade, sandwiched between two Neil Simon comedies at the 1967 Winter Play Season, would take the position of artistic director for the theater company. In the excitement over Thebom and Blair, Atlantans all but forgot their desires for a big name to head the theater company.

Miss Thebom staged Verdi's Aida for the 1967 Grand Opera in the Park and the national press again came to Atlanta. If a bit gaudy, the production nonetheless went down as a success from a staging standpoint. Over 200 extras converged on the stage from all sides of the amphitheater for a triumphal march proclaimed by a trio of heraldic trumpets borrowed from a nearby Army base and perched atop the stage shell. A 16-foot statue was ignited on stage at the climax of the scene. The opening night audience gasped in awe at the sight and then recoiled from the heat wave which rolled out through the theater. The scene ended. There was a moment of silence, and then thunderous applause. Manos had another hit with Aida and, more importantly, with Miss Thebom.

That night Manos' fortunes peaked. The next week his luck began to change. Giselle, with David Blair and Maryon Lane, was rained out twice, forcing cancellation of one of the ballet's two scheduled performances. Owing to a summer of rainy weather which had assailed Theater Under the Stars as

well as Grand Opera in the Park's Giselle, the combined seasons fell some $43,000 short of expected revenues.[18] AMT began negotiations to move TUTS into the newly completed 4,500-seat Atlanta Civic Center Auditorium for summer, 1968.

In October, a children's theater was added to Municipal's existing companies to open in the Center and Manos announced that AMT would also present "in cooperation with Mr. Shaw . . . certain operas or ballets that he may want in his series in the concert hall."[19]

By January, 1968, Manos had amassed a board of sixty-nine members. He again approached Woodruff and was again turned down, this time for lack of a clear financial statement. By spring, the opening of the Center had become a financial concern, Both the Alliance and AMT went to the Woodruff Foundation, pleading "extra-ordinary, nonrecurring expenses," the Alliance to replace necessary items deleted from the original building contract, and AMT to finance its opening production and pre-opening publicity campaign. The Foundation capitulated, giving the former $125,000 and the latter $250,000.

In May, Atlanta Municipal Theater named the North American premiere of King Arthur as its opening production in the Alliance Theater. Blanche Thebom was adapting the script; Michael Howard would direct; and David Blair would choreo-

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[18] Diane Thomas, "TUTS Should Get In Out Of Rain," Atlanta Constitution, September 9, 1967, p. 3-A.

[19] Terry Kay, "Atlanta to Get Children;s Theater," Atlanta Journal and Constitution, October 25, 1967, p. D-7.

graph. The mammoth production called for a cast of over 200 and would enable the Atlanta Repertory Theater Company, the Atlanta Ballet Company, and the Atlanta Opera Company to work together for one spectacular opening presentation.*

Theater Under the Stars became Theater of the Stars in 1968, moving to the Atlanta Civic Center Auditorium. Although ticket sales rose 15 per cent, TOTS profits were unable to absorb increased administrative costs, and Manos was left with a sizable deficit. Postponement of AMT's opening in the Center from September 10 to October 28, when the building would be in complete working order, increased expenses. Manos knew AMT was in a precarious position when rehearsals for Arthur began.

6. Glamorous Opening, Swift Shutdown

On October 4, 1968, the new, expanded Atlanta Museum opened with "A Taste of Paris," an exhibit of some forty paintings on loan from a dozen French museums. The French government presented the museum with a bronze cast of Rodin's "The Shade" in memory of the Atlantans who were killed at or-

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*This was the last, incidently, that Atlantans were to hear of David Blair. He changed his mind about joining AMT at the last minute and opted to remain in London. Joyce Trissler choreographed Arthur and Robert Barnett became artistic director of the Atlanta Ballet Company. In all the opening hoop-la, Blair's absence went virtually unnoticed by Atlanta's cultural enthusiasts.

ly. The Symphony opened two weeks later with Robert Shaw conducting in the new Symphony Hall. Ten days later still, the Atlanta Municipal Theater unveiled King Arthur.

The event attracted an American and foreign press corps of over thirty. The New York Times music critic, Harold Schonberg, called the production ". . . an ambitious attempt that came off. . . done with taste and imagination."[20] Elliot Norton wrote in the Boston Record-American, "King Arthur is so big and so difficult David Merrick wouldn't try it and so intricate the Metropolitan Opera couldn't afford it."[21] Roger Stevens of the National Endowment for the Arts came opening night and liked the show so well he flew his entire staff down from Washington to look at it. Clive Barnes wrote in the New York Times:

> "Atlanta has started doing what I think every large American city, from Chicago downward, will have to do if the performing arts are to play a significant part in the American, as opposed to the New York, way of life. Permanent institutions, working together and struggling up from the bottom, this is the new pattern Atlanta offers us. It is a pattern that needs to be watched by every civic-minded community in the country."[22]

The Center's 200-seat RepStudio, which AMT was also renting, opened Slow Dance on the Killing Ground November 1

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[20] Harold C. Schonberg, "'King Arthur' Camps in Atlanta," New York Times, November 10, 1968, sec. II, p. 17.

[21] Elliot Norton, "Premiere of 'King Arthur' Opens New Theater in Atlanta," Boston Record-American, October 31, 1968, p. 26.

[22] Clive Barnes, "The Arts in Atlanta: Good or Bad, They're Different," New York Times, November 3, 1968, p. 87.

to more good reviews and national attention. Camelot was in business. Arthur, after two slow initial weeks, gathered momentum. Its run extended into a fifth week. The show drew 98 per cent of capacity in its final two weeks.

But things were not as rosy as they appeared. The extension of Arthur necessitated altering the performance schedule. The Atlanta Repertory Theater,* originally slated for its solo debut in The Hostage December 5, had its opening postponed to December 19. La Bohème, the Atlanta Opera Company's first venture alone, opened December 12, instead of December 9. The Atlanta Ballet Company had its initial production, a revival of Swan Lake, moved up from January 6 to January 3. June Havoc's Marathon 33 was moved back from a January 2 opening to January 9.

Arthur had not been extended, it turned out, to enable more of the community to see it, nor even entirely to keep a good thing going, since it was attracting near sell-out audiences, but rather to allow more time for advance and subscription ticket sales, which had not been going as expected. But the rescheduling, which forced a rash of openings during the holiday season, probably did more harm than good. An influenza epidemic also cut into the prospective audience, compounding the problem.

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*The Atlanta Repertory Theater Company, despite its name, did not perform a true repertory schedule, mounting several plays in a single week. Instead, the ART opened one production which played for one month and was followed by a second after the first had closed.

Manos' plans to utilize the Atlanta Symphony's musicians for ballet and opera productions did not materialize, forcing him to search out talented local musicians not employed in the Symphony. But the well had been drained. The orchestral accompaniment had been the weakest feature of Arthur, and it proved detrimental to La Bohème as well.[23]

Critics panned The Hostage, La Bohème, In White America, which was the second RepStudio production, and Marathon 33.* The opera company's remaining works scheduled for the 1968-69 season, Salome and Tristan und Isolde, were scrapped. Sufficient musicians were not available for the 48-piece orchestra Blanche Thebom had envisioned for the productions. Two less ambitious works were substituted. Swan Lake was moved to the end of the ballet company's schedule and two programs of repertoire works were moved up to the winter months.

In early December, rumors began leaking out about bills AMT had failed to pay, and on December 31, paychecks bounced, supposedly through a banking error. On Monday evening, January 13, 1969, persons arriving at the Alliance Theater for a scheduled performance of the ballet company's Repertoire Num-

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[23] Chappel White, "'La Boheme' Lacks Strength at AMT," Atlanta Journal and Constitution, December 22, 1968, p. D-7.

*Atlanta's two newspaper and two television drama reviewers appear to have a negative influence at the box office. Their praise does little to help productions which do not have built in audience appeal, while their criticism can have an adverse effect even on a work with a popular title and star. Their criticism of a little-known play in production has a decidedly detrimental effect. The city's film critics, however, have little influence on the box office receipts.

ber Two found the doors locked and a notice posted that the performance had been cancelled. Manos told the press the following morning that Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., would cease to operate in ten days.

"The dominant and overwhelming reason for our closing is financial," he told the assembled reporters. "Our projected income in our deficit budget was overly optimistic. The 'flu scare and epidemic cut deeply into our anticipated revenues for the month of December. We were requested to postpone our fund drive from the fall to the spring in order not to compete with the Arts Alliance fund drive for their own three component parts. All of this has had its toll on us."[24]

Atlantans were stunned. The Atlanta Arts Alliance hastened to assure the public that the symphony, art school, and museum were untouched by the turmoil. But the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, along with Atlanta Municipal Theater, was again the subject of national publicity, and this time it was unfavorable. Governor Lester Maddox took $15,000 from the Georgia state emergency fund to keep the children's theater going, but no monies from either state or city coffers were forthcoming for the other AMT operations. Performances were discontinued after Saturday, January 18. There was not even enough available capital to phase operations out gradually.

"Atlanta's face sports a black eye, and the cultural

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[24]Diane Stepp, "Municipal Theater Closing in Fund Crisis," Atlanta Constitution, January 15, 1969, p. 1.

center concept throughout America is jolted by AMT's collapse. Surely the Atlanta Establishment and various national foundations will fill the void," wrote an editorial associate of the Atlanta Constitution. "AMT's officials had been learning much about finances in the new Center, and the AMT board had been tightening up expenditures significantly when the ax fell. 'Time just ran out,' one tearful supporter said; 'If we had just had another two months. . . . '"[25]

But neither the Atlanta Establishment nor a national foundation came to pull AMT out of the fire, and the company's officials had learned too little and too late about financing. Budget figures which came to light in the weeks that followed showed that AMT, had it completed its season, even with staff cuts and changes in productions which had already been implemented, would have run up a deficit of approximately $900,000 on a $2 million budget. Upon closing, the organization's debts totalled over $600,000. Manos disclosed that he had been expecting a major national grant. On January 13, he found he could not get it, and the next day he was forced to close. To keep AMT going as long as he did, he not only mortgaged his home, but also spent some $78,000 in federal withholding tax money.

Paul Miller, chairman of "Forward Atlanta," the national advertising program of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, expressed the concern of the city's power structure: "If this situation is not resolved, our position in soliciting for

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[25]Bruce Galphin, "What Next?" (editorial), Atlanta Constitution, January 14, 1969, p. 5.

corporations to headquarter here will be in serious jeopardy. There is no accurate way to measure the loss to business."[26] (Full-page ads in current national magazines pictured the Arts Center captioned, "The arts are in residence in Atlanta.")

How could Atlanta, an extremely image-conscious town, if not as culture hungry as was formerly thought, stand by and allow the dissolution of Atlanta Municipal Theater? After the fact, the principals involved recalled certain warning signs. "I knew they would go under before they opened. Their break-even costs were too high," stated one board member who, while unfamiliar with deficit spending, was nonetheless on the right track.[27] Several members of the Arts Alliance admitted doubts regarding the financial stability of AMT before the contract was signed.[28] These doubts were, in fact, the major reason the company had not been admitted to the Alliance. "More than a year ago, there were troubling questions about what would happen if. . . ," one of AMT's artistic directors admitted.[28] But AMT forged ahead; the Arts Alliance stood by; all of the members of Atlanta's artistic community refused to see the im-

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[26] Edwin Howard, "From Camelot to Catastrophe--I," Memphis Press-Scimitar, January 20, 1969, p. 17.

[27] J. Lee Friedman, member, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., board of trustees, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, February 1, 1969.

[28] Richard H. Rich, chairman, the Atlanta Arts Alliance, telephone interview in Atlanta, Georgia, January 31, 1969; Charles Jagels, president, the Atlanta Arts Alliance, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, March 6, 1969; George Goodwin.

[29] Michael Howard, artistic director, the Atlanta Repertory Theater Company and the Alliance Resident Theater Company, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, March 6, 1969.

pending crash, or, if they did, to turn a hair to stop it.

There is no simple explanation for why AMT folded, or was allowed to fold. The above history is general information, only part of the story. In the chapters that follow, it will be augmented, revealing misjudgments and mistakes made along the way by almost everyone involved.

II. Who is to Blame?

The collapse of the Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., was not inevitable. It could have been averted by several different groups in different ways. First, the Atlanta Arts Alliance could have taken AMT in as a member of its fund-raising organization instead of merely as a tenant in the Arts Center, thus virtually guaranteeing AMT's financial security. Secondly, seeing the Alliance's refusal to admit AMT, the Woodruff Foundation, which believed all organizations in the Center should be governed by one board, could have refused to grant the two groups some $375,000 in pre-opening funds which they requested unless AMT was made a member of the Alliance. Finally, the board of directors of Atlanta Municipal Theater could and should have made a closer investigation than it did of Manos' budget for the Center and should have forced him to set his expenses at a more realistic level. Had the members insisted on being involved with the organization, when AMT's financial situation became apparent, they could have conducted a crisis fund drive among their membership and among the public, if necessary, which might have enabled AMT to hold out until an expected national foundation grant was received.

The above were measures not taken. The following chapters attempt to explain why.

7. The Atlanta Arts Alliance

Relations between Atlanta Municipal Theater and the Atlanta Arts Alliance were characterized by a failure of communications from the start, a failure which intensified with time.

In August, 1965, the Atlanta Arts Alliance signed a contract renting the Alliance Theater to AMT for $50,000 a year. The arrangement was to last for a two-year period, after which Municipal either could be taken in as a member of the Alliance and, thus, a permanent resident in the Center, would continue as a tenant, or would plan to leave after a third year, building its own theater in the meantime.[30]

The contract in no way constituted an artistic endorsement in the collective mind of the Alliance. It was not a vote of confidence in Manos' ability to put together high-quality resident companies to fill the auditorium. Nor was it a financial commitment. (The fact that the Alliance refused to take AMT under its fund-raising wing suggested a lack of confidence in the organization's stability, as did its stipulation that AMT meet its rent in $1,200 weekly installments.) Shortly after AMT's demise, the chairman of the

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[30] Contract between the Atlanta Arts Alliance and the Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., for rental of the Alliance Theater of the Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center, July 1, 1965, p. 21.

board of the Atlanta Arts Alliance summed up the group's position regarding AMT:

> "Are we supposed to take on the responsibility for everything? We thought a building of this sort would be good for the future. We didn't build the theater to be filled immediately. A group of businessmen got together and at a great sacrifice raised money for a building. Chris came along and asked us to rent him the theater. It looked like a solution. He had the staff and facilities. Now the implication is that we're all villians. We were only the landlords. AMT was a tenant.[31]

W. McNeill Lowry, head of the Ford Foundation's program in the arts, once remarked: "Somehow in our country businessmen or municipal and state officials appear to think art begins with real estate."[32] The Atlanta Arts Alliance was no different. In a fund-raising case statement issued May, 1964, the group listed as priorities, "(1) Acquisition of additional land, (2) Center construction, (3) endowment and operating funds," adding at the end that "No renaissance is cheap."[33] The building came first. What filled it was of tertiary importance.

"We didn't think too much about theater in the beginning," said the Alliance's president, "But we felt that eventually we should have some theater in the Center, so we built the 900-seat house. We had no plans to start a company ourselves. The deficits involved in the art school, symphony, and the building had suddenly grown larger than they had been

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[31] Rich, interview.

[32] Herbert Blau, The Impossible Theater: A Manifesto (New York, 1964), p. 11.

[33] Atlanta Arts Alliance Case Statement, May, 1964, p. 3.

before."[34]

The Alliance originally felt the smaller theater should exist simply to be available for a nominal rent to whatever groups in the community wanted to use it for productions. The 450-seat Walter Hill Auditorium, which was part of the existing museum building incorporated into the Center, was fine for lectures, films, and folk concerts, but lacked facilities for theatrical productions. The Alliance Theater, it was felt, would fill the void.

There had been some talk of making Theatre Atlanta, the town's oldest civic theater, which was on the verge of going professional in 1964, into an arm of the Alliance. But TA wanted a home of its own. When one of the group's board members offered to build a million dollar theater in memory of her daughter who was killed in the Orly crash, TA took itself out of consideration for a place in the cultural conglomerate.*

Manos came to the Alliance with his offer to rent the theater in early 1965. "He was making money. His proposal made sense," said an official of the Arts Alliance. "He promised theater, ballet, and opera. It would put some activity

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[34]Charles Jagels, interview.

*Much as with AMT, TA's ambitions proved its downfall. In February, 1969, after ten years as a civic theater and two as a professional group, Theatre Atlanta disbanded. The company had taken a locally written satire, "Red, White, and Maddox," to Broadway after being evicted from its theater building in January for non-payment of rent. When the show closed, the company was still homeless. Most of its members scattered, taking other employment.

into the building and postpone the Alliance's decision on whether or not to take a permanent theater company into its organization."[35]

"Manos told us," said another official, "that if he began producing in the theater he would probably get a Ford grant. We looked over the expense statement he showed us and we knew we were taking a calculated risk."[36] Manos was allowed to rent the Alliance Theater and pay $50,000 for it, while the Arts Alliance washed their hands of any responsibility for his actions and, hence, his fortunes.

But Manos did not see it that way. He occupied a part of the building put up by the Alliance in which he was going to present to Atlantans, if not the greatest theater, opera, and ballet in the country, then at least the greatest administrative concept ever attempted or devised. He evidently felt the Atlanta power structure would not let him fail, that the Alliance would take him in.

"The list of directors of the Alliance is a list of those who run Atlanta," wrote one local commentator when the Center opened.[37] Manos had made no secret of the fact that he wanted the financial security of membership in the organization before AMT opened in the building, and he felt, not

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[35] Goodwin, interview.

[36] Rich, interview.

[37] Jack Spalding, "How Atlanta Raised $13 Million For the Arts," Atlanta Journal and Constitution Sunday Magazine, October 6, 1968, p. 50.

without good reason, that he stood a chance of being admitted. Dr. Wilhelmus Bryant, who was dismissed from his post as advisor to the Alliance in 1965, believed that the various arts in the Center should exist there on an equal basis and would, if given that opportunity, stimulate each other. But more important was the attitude of the Woodruff Foundation in the matter. In granting $7 million in construction funds, it stipulated that the activities in the Center should all be under the control of a single governing board, and viewed the Alliance's acceptance of AMT in a landlord-tenant relationship as a violation of this provision, but did not bring pressure to bear on the Alliance.

Manos took up his tenancy in good faith. He adjusted the theater to his needs, installed lighting and flying equipment not provided by the Alliance, and cut a loading door in the back wall of the theater. AMT lighting designer Nananne Porcher did not stop with the Alliance Theater, but gave free advice on the rest of the building as well.

The last time the Arts Alliance seriously considered taking in AMT was summer, 1968. Then the Alliance itself had cause for financial concern. A cultural center which was originally to have cost only $6 million with but $2 million of that coming from the community had burgeoned in five years into a $13 million edifice, $7 million of which came from grants from the Woodruff Foundation and the remainder from a community which had expected fund drives to end when the first $4 million had been collected in 1964. An additional million had

been raised in 1966 to match a grant from the Ford Foundation for the Atlanta Symphony. This from a town in which, two years previously, the Symphony fund drive had meant raising less than $20,000![38] That same year the bids came in on the Center and the other $4 million had to be raised.

"It is not easy to raise large sums of money in Atlanta," Rich was quoted as saying in a national magazine article on the Center's opening. (The issue made its ironic appearance on the stands two days after AMT closed.) "There is a very narrow base of wealth here."[39] Approximately 75 per cent of the money contributed for the Center had come from only eighteen sources, Rich revealed later. "These are the ugly pragmatic facts," he stated.[40] By summer, 1968, the Alliance feared the springs were dry. Theatre Atlanta, in a $50,000 energency fund drive in late August, had to take its requests to strangers who had never given a nickel to the arts, as well as to the general public. The Atlanta Arts Congress had been forced to cancel its one-day annual program for lack of funds, and several other arts organizations were feeling the pinch.[41]

The Alliance panicked when, after concluding a 1968-69

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[38] Rockefeller Panel Report, The Performing Arts: Problems and Prospects (New York, 1965), p. 71.

[39] Russell Lynes, "After Hours: Atlanta's Culture for All Seasons," Harper's Magazine, February, 1969, p. 26.

[40] Rich, interview.

[41] Betsy Fancher, "Theatre Atlanta: Aftermath of A Crisis," Atlanta Magazine, VIII, October, 1968, p. 102.

contract with the Musicians Union and taking a cost survey, it discovered it would need $500,000 instead of the $185,000 it had expected to raise and had been raising annually since 1966.

In the summer of 1967, Manos and his board had made a diplomatic decision to postpone a $300,000 AMT fund drive scheduled for late in the year, so as not to conflict with the Alliance's second annual push for $185,000. An expensive brochure, already printed, was junked, and Manos then planned to raise $500,000 "in the sunshine of King Arthur."[42] When members of the Alliance discovered that it needed $500,000, they feared an AMT fund drive would endanger their own campaign.* Manos this time did not volunteer to wait for his money. So the Alliance requested he put off his efforts again, this time until March, 1969, when its own drive would be concluded.

Reports conflict as to what methods the Alliance employed to gain Manos' acquiescence. AMT officials maintain they were told the Alliance would "not look with favor" upon requests for funds which came from AMT to corporations they represented and that the Alliance refused an offer from AMT for a joint fund drive. The Alliance counters that no offer

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[42] Manos, interview, February 6, 1969.

* By mid-January, approximately 93 per cent of the Alliance's goal had been pledged. (Edwin Howard, "From Camelot to Catastrophe--II.")

was made for a combined campaign but, had it been, it would have been declined, and that negotiations "never reached the point of our saying we would 'not look with favor' upon AMT requests."[43] Manos, the Alliance contends, simply backed down when he found the Alliance was planning to raise funds in the fall of 1968, knowing he couldn't compete with them.[44] In truth, he could not. His close association with the Alliance would have made it difficult for him to explain the separate campaigns.* Whatever the reasons and whatever the exchange, Manos was forced to go into the Center with $210,000 in guaranteed notes held by his board members in addition to his $305,000 budgeted deficit.

But not all the misunderstanding between AMT and the Arts Alliance was financial, however. Part of it stemmed from conflict of interest. The Alliance strongly felt its commitments toward the 25-year-old Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the 50-year-old Atlanta Art Association. When Manos signed Blanche Thebom and formed the Atlanta Opera Company in the summer of 1967, he came into direct conflict with tentative plans of the Atlanta Symphony.

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[43] Jagels, interview.

[44] Rich, interview.

*The general public did not realize that occupancy of the Arts Center did not make AMT a part of the Alliance. AMT spent far more on publicity than did the Alliance. "They began to look like the be-all and the end-all of the Center," said the Alliance's vice president, George Goodwin. Alliance members readily admit that AMT brought many people to the Center who might not otherwise have come. When AMT failed, however, members were hard put to it to make it clear to the public that the museum, art school, and symphony had survived.

When Robert Shaw, head of the Robert Shaw Chorale, had been signed in 1966 to conduct the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, there was, Alliance members later admitted, some talk of his doing opera on a one-shot basis as part of his orchestral season. No mention was made of this in Shaw's contract, however. In February, 1969, Shaw is quoted as having said the previous October that what really enticed him to Atlanta was the "chance for cross-fertilization of the arts--the chance to have my own orchestra and to work with opera and ballet and choruses."[45]

Before Thebom was signed, Manos announced in the local press that Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony would provide the music for AMT's opera and ballet productions.[46] After the Atlanta Opera Company was formed, Manos had to go around looking for other musicians. The Symphony manager with whom Manos had made a verbal agreement for cooperation had died in early 1967 and his successor did not take up the negotiations. It was rumored that Shaw had had hopes of serving as musical director for the entire Center, a logical ambition on his part.

Although the contract between AMT and the Alliance for rental of the theater stated that AMT may do opera and ballet, Alliance officials denied any knowledge that Manos was planning to open an opera company during his first year in the

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[45] Russell Lynes, op. cit., p. 28.

[46] Terry Kay, "Atlanta to Get Children's Theater."

Center. "We wanted legitimate theater, but not lyric theater," stated the Alliance president, Charles Jagels. "That's how it started out, with a repertory theater, then, the next thing I know, we've got Blanche Thebom and an opera company, too."[47] Other Alliance members made it clear that they considered the formation of an opera company totally unrealistic on Manos' part. It was from this point on, Jagels said later, that the Alliance became "seriously concerned" about Manos' ability to make a go of it financially in the Center, but added the Alliance "took no measures because he was so confident a national foundation would step in and help him."[48]

As conclusive evidence of a communications breakdown, the Alliance, which had made a verbal agreement with Manos to clear with him any bookings they made into Symphony Hall, rented it without consulting him to Britain's Theatre Royal Windsor for two weeks in December. The group presented three "fine plays" in direct competition with The Hostage. Neither company drew well.

8. The Woodruff Foundation

There was one organization with a vested interest in the Arts Center which could have brought pressure to bear on the

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[47] Edwin Howard, "From Camelot to Catastrophe--II."

[48] Jagels, interview.

Arts Alliance to admit Municipal Theater but which, because such an action would conflict with its long-standing policies, did not. The Woodruff Foundation had granted $7 million for construction of the Center, said its administrator, on the condition that the various groups in the Center would have a single governing board. The previous administrator had been a proponent of the umbrella administrative concept. The Foundation had granted $4 million to the ill-fated performing arts center proposed by the city in 1961 on the condition that all its activities be governed by a single body. The Foundation had solicited a manpower breakdown for that center from Manos, and he had been virtually guaranteed residene in it, had the funding bond issue passed.

The lease arrangement between the Alliance and Municipal was regarded by the Foundation as a violation of the spirit of the grant and as "the major mistake that was made. The Alliance should either have taken in AMT or curbed their activities in theater altogether."[49]

It is rumored that in the summer of 1968, when it became apparent that both groups, landlord and tenant, would need to conduct separate $500,000 fund drives, the Foundation volunteered to underwrite $250,000 for AMT if the Alliance took the company in as a member. But the latter organization, as a result of the unexpected growth in its own oper-

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[49] Jones

ating deficit, feared to add Manos' obligations to its own. "Even then it looked like he was headed for a crash," one member said of Manos.

When both organizations approached the Woodruff Foundation for pre-opening funds, the Foundation could have refused to grant them unless the Alliance took in AMT. But it did not. "If we had put strings on our grants in the first place and stipulated that the Alliance had to adopt AMT, I think the two groups would have merged," admitted its administrator, Boisfelleut Jones. "But we never do. We did what everyone says they wish foundations would do - namely, refuse to interfere in policy matters - and look what happened."[50]

9. The Board of Directors

The Alliance refused to let in AMT and the Woodruff Foundation declined to apply pressure. AMT entered the Center with the knowledge that for the first year at least, it would almost surely have to go it alone. The organization appeared to have strong support to fall back on, however, a seven-member executive board and sixty-nine additional "trustees" recently recruited, not to mention the pending sum from the national foundation. If bumps came, these people should have been able to provide an adequate cushion. But they did not know what was expected of them and were not pre-

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[50] Ibid.

pared to assist. For the most part, they were not involved deeply with the organization, and so did not react strongly.

AMT had always had "ten or twelve people who would help us out a little."[51] But this was not enough for the Woodruff Foundation. After Manos had put together his board of sixty-nine responsible persons, in addition to his executive committee, he did not know what to do with all this manpower. A meeting was called in early 1968 for the new board. Peter Stelling, then president of AMT, read a report; Robert Ferst introduced Manos; Manos gave a talk about his "umbrella concept;" and everybody went home. Six months later the board met again and members were asked to specify whether they preferred to work with theater, ballet, or opera. Nothing else was asked of them until AMT began to feel the financial pinch.

"We were a bright crew," said one member, the society editor of the Atlanta Journal. "We had joined with the full intention of working for AMT. I don't think many were along simply to get their names in the program. These people didn't need prestige. They already had it."[53] "The people were mostly used to civic work and expected to be asked to work

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[51] Ferst, interview.

[52] Jones, interview.

[53] Edith Hills Coogler, member, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., Board of Trustees, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, March 4, 1969.

for Municipal," said another.[54] "We were never asked to vote on anything," reported a third. "I'd told them I hadn't too much time to spend on activities, but I had at least expected to be asked to vote on things."[55] While outsiders charge that the board members left their business sense at home when them went to meetings, the members counter that nothing was ever asked of them and that they seldom met.

"They had two meetings," relates Comer Jennings, an Atlanta artist who served on the new board. "I got notices of several others, followed by other notices that they had been cancelled. I was in Europe for the summer, but when I came back, there they were in my mail box. Then in November, they had another meeting, a desparation kind of thing. Only about twenty people showed up. We were asked to give Robert Ferst emergency powers to save the theater, and Chris made a plea for money, even for small donations of five or ten dollars. The minute they brought up the subject of money, our hearts hit the ground. None of us had any idea AMT was in such a shape. We had thought the executive committee was taking care of major financial decisions. We had all been together on this fun little society board and we'd never been asked to do anything. Now all at once they were begging us for money.

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[54] Comer, Jennings, member, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., Board of Trustees, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, April 2, 1969.

[55] Henry Jova, member, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., Board of Trustees, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, April 2, 1969.

We didn't know what to think. It was embarrassing. I suppose we panicked. I don't think but about two or three people gave anything at all."[56]

Manos had found himself a board of sixty-nine eager, earnest people, most of them willing actively to promote AMT. They had been assembled primarily to fulfill Woodruff's requirements, however, and neither Manos nor the executive committee had thought to use them beyond that. They had not even been apprised of AMT's activities, progress, or needs. As a result, when Manos came frantically begging their help, they recoiled in shock.

Atlanta Municipal Theater's executive board had not remained stable throughout the organization's preparations to move into the Center. Seven months before the move, Peter Stelling, then president, accepted a job in New York and left. Robert H. Ferst, formerly secretary-treasurer, was named president. Ferst had been inactive for almost a year previously, owing to business obligations. The auditor was chronically behind in his books, and it is conceivable that no one, not even Manos himself, knew from day to day over an extended period of time what financial shape AMT was in until early December when the books were finally brought up to date.

The executive board in November demanded a staff cutback, which was immediately carried out. But by that time it was just a drop in the deficit bucket. Neither new nor old board members could do anything two months later but

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56 Comer Jennings, interview.

stand by open-mouthed when AMT collapsed. The blind faith of those people who had been with Manos since he paid off in three years the $236,000 running deficit of Theater Under the Stars has already been noted. Neither they nor the new members thought it necessary to question him.

III. Atlanta Municipal Theater in the Arts Center--A Death Wish from the Start?

> "The way they conducted their operations, the mistakes they made, the misjudgments, the incredible waste of money and manpower, it looked almost as if Atlanta Municipal Theater had a death wish from the start."
>
> --James Lineberger, former head of Atlanta Municipal Theater's Advertising Department.

The overriding reason the Atlanta Arts Alliance refused admission to Atlanta Municipal Theater and that the Woodruff Foundation went no further than it did in forcing the issue appears to be AMT's own instability. Manos himself calls the move into the Arts Center a "gamble." The success of the venture hinged, to a great degree, on the beneficence of a national foundation. Poor planning and mismanagement undermined AMT's chances there. The seemingly suicidal tendencies which AMT evidenced in other areas should be laid to over-ambition, rather than to Freudian urges toward self-destruction. The dream was in reach, and Manos threw eight years of theatrical knowledge and experience in Atlanta to the winds in order to attain it.

The chapters which follow attempt to deal with the blunders which were made by the people who administrated the Atlanta Municipal Theater.

10. Building on Hopes

Members of Atlanta Municipal Theater's executive board were holding $210,000 in notes when King Arthur opened. The notes covered losses AMT was still carrying from the ill-fated Fine Play Season three years earlier, from the rain-drenched 1967 summer in the amphitheater, from projections on the 1968 Winter Play Season which had fallen short of expectations. The 1968 indoor Theater of the Stars did not do as well as expected, either, and when Manos put to its surpluses the costs of his administrative build-up, he found himself in for a total loss of $100,000. Thus he had to secure an additional $100,000 in notes from his board in November after moving into the Center.

Although the $250,000 from the Woodruff Foundation was to cover pre-opening publicity and staff increase, the opening date of AMT was postponed from September 10 to October 28. These six extra weeks at peak staff size (before revenues began coming in) added another $29,000 to expenses. The $100-ticket gala was expected to bring in $60,000. Only $36,000 was raised. Manos entered the Center with $568,000 in real or anticipated debts: The $24,000 which the gala had failed to raise, the additional $29,000 in pre-opening salaries, the $210,000 in notes being held by his board, and the $305,000 budgeted deficit for the 1968-69 season. Add to this the $100,000 in notes raised shortly after Arthur opened, and

the figure becomes $668,000.

From the start of AMT's expansion, Manos believed that part of his funding would come through a sizable national grant. This is the hope on which he entered the Center. Manos admitted later that he knew the move was a "gamble," a "calculated risk,"[57] at the time that he made it. There had been sufficient national interest in his administrative umbrella concept for him to feel someone was bound to shore him up in his first year if he appeared shaky. And if a national foundation didn't come through, there was always the Woodruff Foundation. Surely it would not let him down. But his confidence in both national and local money was misplaced.

In October, 1966, Manos had submitted a report to the Rockefeller Foundation requesting aid. What he projected was, essentially, the Atlanta Municipal Theater as it opened two years later in the Arts Center.[58] Nothing came of his query, so Manos turned to the Ford Foundation and to the Woodruff Foundation. The latter granted him $250,000 for pre-opening expenses, which was to cover much of the season ticket promotion expenses and production costs for Arthur. The Foundation bent its rules to make the grant, since it ordinarily gives only capital grants and will not defray operating expenses.

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[57] Manos, interview, April 5, 1969.

[58] "A Proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation for Material Support of a Five-Year Program in Resident Professional Performance and Training in Drama, Dance, and Opera," October 18, 1966.

Manos requested $500,000 from Ford to be augmented by a like amount from the community, plus a $1 million non-matching capital grant. Ford showed some interest in the unique aspects of AMT's administrative organization and, in late December, 1968, W. McNeill Lowry asked Manos to come to New York and see him personally. The upshot of the visit was that Lowry gave Manos to believe he stood a good chance of getting the grants at the end of his first season. (It is Ford's usual policy, when granting other than "seed money" to new organizations, to demand that the groups prove themselves first for a season. In this way the Foundation can both ascertain the organization's ability to run itself efficiently and determine whether it has received a mandate from the community it serves.)[59] There was a possibility Manos would receive the grants in early 1969, but that the money would not be made available to him until AMT's second season. By the time Manos visited the Ford Foundation, the grants were his only real hope of survival. If they were assured, then even though he did not have the money in hand, he could borrow against them and keep the wolf from the door until his March fund drive, at which time he would attempt to raise matching funds.

But Manos needed a large contribution to sustain him until March and enable him to meet his $500,000 goal. He approached the Woodruff Foundation in November, 1968. After six weeks of negotiations, the Foundation refused him. The date was January 13, 1969. The following day, Manos told the pub-

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[59] Julius Novick, Beyond Broadway: The Quest for Permanent Theatres (New York, 1968), p. 89.

lic that AMT was closing. He withdrew his apllication for the Ford grant, knowing that he would be unable to raise the $500,000 to meet it.

National foundations would, doubtless, have been more anxious to support Atlanta Municipal Theater if, in addition to the attractiveness of its administrative program as an experiment, the organization had evidenced greater efforts toward education and community service and involvement. In the prospectus he submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation, Manos spoke of "professional in-school touring activities and a school for the performing arts" only in passing as long-range plans.[60] Except for establishing a children's theater staffed with adult actors as one of the organization's performing arms, AMT had done little in the field of education and had few plans firmed up to do anything more when they moved into the Center. An apprentice plan with the University of Georgia, which had been discussed at one time, never materialized Only three of the acting company were college fellowship students, considerably fewer than were previously intended. AMT had done no work in Atlanta's ghetto areas and, seemingly, planned none. The organization did not have a history of community involvement, other than a summer apprentice program at Theater Under the Stars and the annual distribution of 10,000 TUTS tickets to servicemen and underpriviledged child-

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[60] Letter from Christopher B. Manos accompanying "A Proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation for Material Support of A Five-Year Program in Resident Professional Performances and Training in Drama, Dance, and Opera," October 18, 1966.

ren. (Although this may sound like a large number, it represented only 272 seats per performance in the 6,000-seat amphitheater, or less than five per cent of the house.) While AMT did have student tickets to performances in the Center at half price, the cost was still quite high, and student season subscriptions were made available only for the early show on Saturdays and the Sunday matinees. There were no teachers' previews nor educational materials on the plays supplied to high school and college English departments.

When Manos approached the Woodruff Foundation in November, Jones took a look at his books and offered him money for an accountant to set them right before any further negotiations could be undertaken. Baumol and Bowen maintain "There is the view that one of the main handicaps of many performing groups [in gaining grants from local foundations] is their relatively unbusinesslike organization and administration."[61] The Rockefeller Report concludes that "Even foundations that might be inclined to support the performing arts complain that arts organizations characteristically ignore the financial facts of life, are frequently careless in their managerial procedures, and expect to be supported without providing a plausible projection of future expenses."[62] AMT proved a typical case. After taking a look at the updated books, the

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[61] William J. Baumol and William G. Bowen, Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 345.

[62] The Rockefeller Panel Report, p. 95.

Woodruff Foundation refused them the needed $250,000.

"It becomes a question of priorities," Jones said sadly three months later. "Is it proper stewardship to invest heavily and continually in a project which is improperly managed and which has an insufficient mandate from the community?"[63]

Manos had gambled, and lost.

11. Budgeting on an Over-Estimated Audience

Manos' projected deficit of 15 per cent in a $2 million budget was wildly unrealistic, even allowing for the possible savings of the umbrella administration. Baumol and Bowen list deficits for ten U.S. opera companies (excluding the Metropolitan) as averaging 45 per cent of expenditures in 1963. Two civic ballets have an income gap spread of between 40 per cent and 70 per cent. Fourteen regional theaters list deficits of 15 per cent.[64] This would, at best, have averaged out to a combined deficit of 32.5 per cent for a theater, opera, and ballet company run in the manner of Municipal's. In 1967, the 750-seat Mark Taper Forum theater in Los Angeles allowed for a $250,000 to $300,000 deficit in a budget of $1 million, between 25 and 33-1/3 per cent. And this with 29,600 season subscriptions sold, more than any other theater in the country

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[63] Jones, interview.

[64] Baumol and Bowen, p. 149.

except Lincoln Center![65*]

For AMT to survive its first season without outside assistance, it was imperative that it keep within budget and that the productions gross at least as well as expected. Manos and his staff did a laudable job of keeping down expenses, which is even more impressive considering they allowed themselves a contingency fund of only one per cent. According to figures released later by Manos for the period of September 1 through December 31, his projected budget exceeded his actual expenditures for that period by only $26,012.57. All but $2,012.57 of that sum would have been covered, Manos explained, had the gala tickets sold as expected.[66*]

But even King Arthur, which at 93 per cent of capacity would appear to be a success in most ledgers, did not live up to Manos' expectations. Had Arthur played to 100 per cent of

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[65]Novick, p. 100.

* Season ticket sales for all three AMT companies totalled only 8,700.

[66]Terry Kay, "The Camelot that Wasn't," Atlanta Journal and Constitution, March 30, 1969, p. D-9.

*Some juggling had evidently been done to keep within the budget between September 1 and December 31. Money estimated for central administration salaries and expenses had been set at $88,946, while actual expenses totalled $103,955.41. Production expenditures for the repertory theater, the Rep-Studio theater, the ballet company, and the Christmas production of the Nutcracker had all been shaved slightly to make up the difference. It must also be remembered that there was a staff cutback in November which had not been originally intended. This makes the actual administrative expenses, and some of the artistic expenses, even higher than on first impression, since the projected figures take in salaries through December of persons dismissed in November.

capacity and the gala made the expected $60,000, the cost per seat per performance would have come to $6.43. Since tickets were priced at $7.50, Arthur could have made a profit of $1.07 per ticket, assuming no student purchases. But at the 93 per cent of capacity which the production drew and with only $36,000 of the cost defrayed by gala tickets, the cost per seat per performance came to approximately $7.80, or a loss of $ .30 on every ticket sold. Anticipated grosses for Arthur were $165,738. Actual box office intake was a mere $141,588.[67]

Arthur was only the first indication of a disastrous trend. In seventeen weeks, for only nine of which AMT was in production, the gap between projected income ($403,940) and actual income ($251,755) had come to $152,185. If the season had been allowed to continue and if the trend had persisted, AMT would have wound up in May with over a $900,000 deficit.[68]

The two repertoire presentations of the ballet company, which had been expected to bring in over $50,000, had grossed only $21,354. Box office receipts for La Bohème had been estimated at over $45,000. Grosses from the first Children's Theater production had been predicted at over $24,000 and came to less than $6,000. The Hostage had been expected to

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[67]Terry Kay, "The Camelot That Wasn't."

[68]Ibid.

bring in nearly $41,000. It grossed a scant $13,000. Even the dependable annual Nutcracker did not draw as expected. Instead of earning its projected $66,322, the Christmas show's receipts totalled only $40,094.[69] Manos, after eight years' experience in producing for Atlanta audiences, had fantastically overestimated his attendance figures. He had counted on an audience which simply wasn't there.

12. The 'Educated Audience'

In predicting his attendance figures, Manos thought he would be able to attract his old Theater Under the Stars and Winter Play Season followers to AMT productions in the Center. He had counted on the loyalty of more than 22,000 WPS and TUTS season ticket holders, assuming they would plunk down their money again for something else produced by AMT. But these audiences were not "buying AMT," or even theater in general. They were buying the star system, musicals and comedies. They were buying the opportunity to sit outdoors and sing along with Janis Paige in South Pacific, to eat popcorn during La Traviata under the stars. They would not follow AMT into the Arts Center to see three plays they'd never heard of, two classics without stars, and one show which hadn't even been announced.

Manos thought he had been "educating audiences into the

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[69] Ibid.

habit of theater going." He was mistaken. Arthur brought an average of 25,000 people per week into the Arts Center, exhausting the drawing potential of the Center as a curiousity. The inquisitive came; they saw; they had done their cultural duty and had their cultural experience; they did not come back.

Manos had planned his budget, and with it his audience estimates, according to the business Winter Play Season and Grand Opera in the Park had done. Winter Play was budgeted at 75 per cent of capacity and actually averaged over 85 per cent in the 700-seat Women's Club Playhouse. So the Atlanta Repertory Theater in the 868-seat Alliance Theater was budgeted at 75 per cent. Winter play Season productions had run to such titles as Barefoot in the Park, Generation, The Impossible Years, Don't Drink the Water, and There's A Girl in My Soup. The only serious work which had been presented in recent years was Marat/Sade in 1967. The production was highly advertised in Atlanta, had been pre-sold to the literati through national publicity received by the New York production, and drew in a fair percentage of the curious because it put a naked man on the stage.

The Atlanta Repertory Theater Company was not presenting a Winter Play Season. The Hostage, in which the group made its solo debut after appearing as part of the cast of Arthur, was to be followed by June Havoc in Marathon 33, her comedy about the marathon dances of the '30's which had had a short run on Broadway in 1963. After this would come the professional premiere of Wedding Band, written by Alice Childress

and starring Abby Lincoln. It would be followed by The Cherry Orchard, Much Ado About Nothing, and a sixth play to be announced. No stars had been named for the final three shows and the first three were unfamiliar to Atlanta audiences. Only slightly over 3,000 season subscriptions were sold and The Hostage, which was insufficiently publicized and poorly received by reviewers, played to only 34 per cent of capacity.

In the 200-seat RepStudio, members of the acting company directed Slow Dance on the Killing Ground, In White America, and The Homecoming. Atlanta audiences had become familiar with the title of the latter through national publicity which attended the New York production and it probably would have drawn an audience, something neither of the other two productions managed, however it was cut short by AMT's closing. Although Slow Dance was a critical success, the RepStudio drew for its three completed productions less than one-fifth of the audience expected.

Poor production quality, as well as subject matter, may have combined with the unfamiliarity of the plays to keep audiences away. Only Arthur, Slow Dance, and Homecoming were critically successful. "The Atlanta Repertory Theater," one reviewer concluded, produced a lot of stuff for its short life; but most of it, finally, was really not very good."[70] Others were less charitable. The Hostage was regarded as vul-

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[70] Don Smith, "AMT Revisited," Atlanta Magazine, VIII, April, 1969, p. 116.

gar by genteel Atlantans. Much of its offensiveness was laid, not to the playwright, but to the tactics of director Howard. The late Ralph McGill, publisher of the Atlanta Constitution, who had "seen and enjoyed" The Hostage in New York both on and off Broadway, said Howard had "made the homosexual aspect much more offensive than it needed to be, often at the expense of the play's real humor."[71] A member of AMT's own staff said of the two ART productions that "while Marathon was only dull, The Hostage stunk."

The subject matter of the two plays gave rise to complaints on all sides about AMT's "seedy season." Typical is the appraisal given The Hostage by Atlanta Arts Alliance president Jagels: "Here we built this lovely new arts center and the first thing AMT puts on the stage is a play about deviates!"[72]

Both Manos and Howard admitted after the fact that the season they had set out for the repertory theater was not the kind of fare that would attract a mass audience. But, just as the Alliance had no strings on Manos regarding what he wanted to put in the theater, Manos had no say as to Howard's directorial choices. Howard picked the plays he wanted to do. For Atlanta audiences they were not the plays to fill 75 per cent of the seats in the Alliance Theater. Manos admitted later that perhaps he should have exercised some control in the

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[71] Ralph McGill, publisher (now deceased), Atlanta Constitution, interview held in Atlanta, Georgia, January 31, 1969.

[72] Charles Jagels, interview.

matter, given the size of the audiences he needed to attract in order to meet his budget, but that such a move would have gone against his concept of the relation between administrator and artistic director.

Grand Opera in the Park, which had included both ballet and opera, generally sold at 90 per cent of capacity in the 6,000-seat Chastain Park Amphitheater for one performance. Manos, therefore, estimated that his Atlanta Ballet Company and Atlanta Opera Company would capture an average 90 per cent attendance. But they were also performing unfamiliar works without stars and suffered the same fate as the theater company. An updated English-language La Bohème offended the purists; Salome and Tristan und Isolde had not been performed in Atlanta before. Only 2,000 season subscriptions wer sold for opera and Bohème drew not 90 per cent but 55. The ballet company played to only 40 per cent of capacity with its two programs of short repertoire works. Swan Lake, which was given after AMT's collapse, played to nearly full houses. Only 3,000 ballet subscriptions were sold.

As any television executive knows, if you put comedy before "heavy" drama, you may catch for the latter some viewers of the former too lethargic to turn the dial. By scheduling Grand Opera in the Park directly after Theater Under the Stars and offering the two in a season-ticket package, AMT had taken advantage of this habit. The opera and ballet companies in the Center had no Theater Under the Stars to act as an audience feeder. Director Michael Howard had chosen to present King Arthur in "camp" fashion, with a "duke" who supposedly

had staged the entertainment and his cigar-smoking girlfriend, both of whom insisted on getting into the act when things got dull. This, combined with resplendent costumes, lavish sets, and much stage gimmickry, had made the production "fun." But Arthur was a novelty, a "specialty act," and not the kind of production to provide a continuity for the rest of the season.

Manos and AMT had long been identified with "warmed over Broadway musicals."[73] In an analysis of the Atlanta Municipal Theater written in 1965, a local commentator spoke of criticism of Manos' star system producing tactics coming "privately from many in the dramatic field."[74] Manos was anxious to revise his detractors' image of himself and his company, and he wanted to please the Arts Alliance who, he said once, had perhaps feared he would "put Mary, Mary in the Center."[75] Manos had turned arty, but he was still looking to the old musical fans to fill his seats. He had had one baptism of fire with his Fine Play Season, the losses from which had not been fully paid off when he moved into the Center. He should have heeded the experience then, before going into "fine theater" again without adequate preparation. There are many parallels between the Fine Play Season and the debacle in the Arts Center: neither the Atlanta Repertory Theater Company nor the

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[73] James Lineberger, "Atlanta Municipal Theater's Spectacular Inaugural Season," Great Speckled Bird, January 24, 1969, p. 19.

[74] Dick Hebert, "Municipal Theater Produces for the Crowds," Atlanta Constitution, December 11, 1965, p. 1.

[75] Manos, interview, February 6, 1969.

cast assembled for the Fine Play Season contained any stars; both opened about the same time of year; neither was sufficiently publicized.

The Fine Play Season drew 32 per cent of capacity, the Atlanta Repertory Theater Company 34 per cent for The Hostage, the ballet company 40 per cent for Repertoire Number One, and the opera company 55 per cent for La Bohème, for a combined average of 43 per cent of capacity. The very name "fine play" gave the presentations a sound of "culture" at its most meretricious--patronizing, vaguely "educational," and dull. The image of the Cultural Center had much the same effect. Manos readily admits that the publicity for the Fine Play season was poor. Promotion for the productions following Arthur was insufficient and confusing.

The rescheduling necessitated by the one-week extension of Arthur created a barrage of openings during the holiday season and added to the confusion. An influenza epidemic left more seats empty. (This is particularly evident in the decimated audiences for the hardy perennial Nutcracker.) Ticket prices to AMT productions in the Center may have come as a shock to many of the TUTS and WPS supporters. Prices ran sixty cents to a dollar higher than those of Theatre Atlanta, which also had a professional company, and three to four dollars above first run film prices. Despite these circumstances, however, the primary obstacle still appears to be the choice, or more precisely, the scheduling of productions.

The theater company had scheduled three little-known works at the start of the season. This was a serious mis-

take. Audiences have to be lured in to see the first show, before they can be won to theater and persuaded to come back. While Arthur did not provide a lead-in to The Hostage, it might have helped Much Ado About Nothing. This could have been followed by an unknown work, Wedding Band, perhaps, starring Abby Lincoln still fresh from her film publicity in For Love of Ivy. Marathon 33, from all reports, should not have been presented. One of the repertory comedy staples might have been substituted, at the risk of becoming overloaded with classics, perhaps something from the Restoration. This could have been followed by The Cherry Orchard, for which a star might have been obtained for any of several roles, then The Hostage. For his final selection, Howard had hoped to get the rights to Hair or Boys in the Band. While this would scarcely have been possible and trading on their shock value might have done little in the long run toward building permanent audiences for ART, another recent play in the schedule might have been sensible. But for the fact that the producers allowed the size of the resident company to dictate its choice of plays and restricted small-cast pieces to the "experimental theater," The Homecoming might better have served the Alliance Theater than the RepStudio.

The opera company came up with an adventurous schedule. La Bohème should have been a fine foil for Arthur. The ballet company's Swan Lake should have remained as originally scheduled and not have been postponed. The move proved bad economy, since it discouraged audiences.

13. Umbrella Promotion

Manos had sold Theater Under the Stars and the Winter Play Season simply by advertising the shows and excerpting a few quotes from New York reviewers. The new AMT, he felt, required more. He embraced institutional advertising with the zeal of a true believer. When the Center opened, Michael Parver, AMT general manager in charge of production and the man who had been responsible for the bulk of advertising done, described it as an effort to (1) project the umbrella concept to the public through the presentation of King Arthur, (2) explain the transition from star system to resident company, and (3) describe the type of plays AMT intended to present. It was an educational program. Officials at AMT were so caught up in the multiple producing organization in the Center, they forgot they had a particular product to sell.* Such varied slogans as "You ain't seen nothin' yet,"

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*A certain amount of institutional advertising did seem in order, however, in addition to a compaign promoting AMT's productions. A plethora of similar sounding names and addresses had baffled the city's infrequent theater-goers (who, despite only occasional visits, comprise a large proportion of the theater audience) for some time.

By 1968, audiences had begun to confuse Theatre Atlanta, which had two years previously opened its repertory company in a new building on West Peachtree at Seventeenth Street, with the Atlanta Municipal Theater's Atlanta Repertory Theater, scheduled to open in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, formerly called the Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center, three blocks away on Peachtree at Fifteenth Street. Theatre Atlanta, before moving into its own home, had given its plays in the Atlanta Women's Club Playhouse on Peachtree at Thirteenth Street, the very same auditorium in which AMT had held its Winter Play Season for the past five years. Now Municipal

"A full-course dinner of theater," and "A seven-ring circus" (this last appearing on a brochure accompanied by pictures of the "inmates" from Michael Howard's Marat/Sade with neither captions nor explanations) floated around in numerous pieces of literature and on infrequent TV and radio spot announcements, doing little more than bewildering the prospective customer. The difficulty of sorting out and unravelling separate order blanks for theater seasons, ballet schedules, and opera tickets added to the confusion. King Arthur provided even further complications by being included on all three forms.

Such poorly conceived and ill-coordinated advertising efforts turned out to be the result of an eleventh hour

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Theater was going to open the Atlanta Repertory Theater Company, the Atlanta Opera Company, and the Atlanta Ballet Company in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center administered by the Atlanta Arts Alliance, formerly the Atlanta Art Association and the Atlanta Symphony Guild. The Atlanta Repertory Theater Company, Atlanta Opera Company, and Atlanta Ballet Company were going to play in the Alliance Theater. The Atlanta Symphony would play in Symphony Hall in the Center. Robert Shaw had conducted the Atlanta Symphony in its 1967-68 season in the newly completed Atlanta Civic Center Auditorium, which Atlanta Municipal Theater had rented in the summer of 1968 for its Theater of the Stars (formerly Theater Under the Stars) season. The Civic Center had been built to replace the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium, which was still in use in another part of town. The list has all the confusion, without the underlying logic, of a chorus from Gilbert and Sullivan.

The appearance of 1968 Winter Play Season ticket stubs in Theatre Atlanta's ticket boxes and the arrival of contributions to the latter's emergency fund drive in AMT's mail at the Arts Center, while regarded as merely amusing by workers from both groups, indicated the presence of a potentially serious problem. AMT's institutional advertising, however, should have been kept simple, should have concentrated on identification, and should have constituted only a part of the campaign.

shake-up in the publicity department. They resulted not from an ill-conceived master plan, but from the lack of one.

In January, 1968, AMT hired Mary Jolliffe to supervise advertising and "image development" for the organization before its opening in the Center. She had previously performed the same function for the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, the Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival, and Expo '67, and had had experience with the Metropolitan Opera Company. She recommended, as at the Guthrie, publicizing "a theater which puts entertainment and excitement into great drama."[76] Scofield, Braselton, and Williams, an Atlanta advertising firm, handled the account, working closely with Miss Jolliffe and with James Lineberger, who headed AMT's advertising department. Lineberger had worked previously with Miss Jolliffe at the Guthrie Theatre. The advertising program they worked out concentrated on borderline cases who might or might not come to the Center, what Bradley Morison calls the "maybes."[77] Habitual theater-goers would get all the encouragement they needed through direct mail and personal contact. The public campaign would go after converts.

The campaign conflicted with the new image Manos was cultivating for AMT. After years of being considered no more than a local producing arm of the commercial theater, a man

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[76] Bradley G. Morison and Kay Fliehr, In Search of an Audience: How An Audience Was Found for the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre (New York, 1968), p. 59.

[77] Ibid.

with his heart in the box office,[78] Manos was determined to complete his transition to highbrow culture. Despite pronouncements to the contrary, AMT behaved as if it wanted only spectators whose cultural credentials were assured. The campaign set out by Mary Jolliffe, James Lineberger, and Scofield, Braselton, and Williams was worn away by attrition. "AMT didn't want to move out into the community," charges Braselton. "They wanted to mine the same old vein in the same old way." The AMT administration wanted an advertising campaign aimed almost exclusively at the affluent white upper-middle-class. The Negro press and radio stations were virtually ignored, although the best-known actor in the AMT company, Clayton Corbin, was black and AMT planned to bring in Abby Lincoln to star in a drama by black playwright Alice Childress.* Little advertising was done on "rock" radio stations, although AMT professed to be seeking a student audience.

When Manos had asked the Woodruff Foundation for pre-opening funds, he had been forced to pare a $485,000 projected deficit to $305,000. His largest cut was in his advertising budget, from the $229,000 which Mary Jolliffe had expected when she arrived to $149,000, a reduction of over 30 per cent. The grant from the Woodruff Foundation, which was to

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[78] Dick Hebert, Atlanta Constitution, p. 1.

* While few Negroes in Atlanta now habitually go to the theater, the city is the home of the Atlanta University Center, a complex of five predominantly Negro colleges, and has a large, affluent black middle-class population.

cover part of the publicity costs, did not come through until three months before the company opened, so money for advertising was even tighter than it first appeared. The resultant hand-to-mouth existence of the publicity department necessitated the scrapping of a television campaign which, through a communications failure, had already got under way. Various estimates of the total amount wasted on the unused campaign range from $13,000 (Manos) to $25,000 (Lineberger). One TV spot had already been shot at a cost of $6,000. This was in mid-May. Shortly thereafter, Mary Jolliffe resigned. Michael Parver, one of AMT's administrative officers, took over the advertising department in July. In August, Lineberger left AMT and Scofield, Braselton, and Williams gave up the account. Vestiges of the original campaign remained in a publicity report submitted in July. It suggested, among other things, special indoctrination sessions with high school and college English teachers regarding the plays to be presented, and an "AMT knight," who would, presumably, pop up unannounced in selected corners of town and publicize AMT, the Center, and King Arthur.[79] But neither of these suggestions, nor, indeed, most of the report, was implemented.

AMT officials maintain the campaign set forth by Mary Jolliffe, James Lineberger, and Scofield, Braselton, and Williams "might have worked, if we'd had two years and around

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[79] Bill Dial, "Publicity Campaign for the Atlanta Repertory Theater Company," July, 1968, p. 11.

$2 million,"[80] but that time and money were too short to warrant even a test period. Those who were connected with the publicity department counter that their campaign, which was not aimed strictly at the upper-middle-class, conflicted with the image Manos and his co-workers wanted to establish for themselves as members of Atlanta's "cultural community" now that they were going into the Arts Center.

The cut in AMT's original budget should have been more evenly distributed throughout the various departments. In the first analysis, the advertising department is the simplist place from which to take the money, but in the long run, it proved infinitely more costly. Perhaps the original advertising campaign would have worked no better than the substitute measures to which AMT had to resort. In trying to sell something "exciting," one runs the risk of suggesting that perhaps it is not. The best advertising approach would have been to concentrate on making the productions seem attractive. But whatever the advertising decided upon, the publicity department should not have been mishandled so blatantly. The AMT management should either have given the department a greater degree of autonomy, or should have run it themselves from the beginning. Their indecision in the matter occasioned an inexcusable waste of time, money, and personnel. Their conduct was symptomatic of a serious internal problem.

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[80] Michael Parver, general manager of production, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., interview in Atlanta, Georgia, April 2, 1969.

14. Large Business, Small Business Methods

Shortly after AMT's collapse, one of the organization's administrators commented: "I think I'll write the inside story of AMT. I've got the perfect title for it--'Somebody Stole Our Mistress.' That's what it felt like when the whole thing began to swing into operation. It was suddenly out of our hands. We felt anger, frustration, seeing other people sitting in offices we had dreamed about, occupying positions we had brought into existence, carrying out the plans we had made in this theater we'd crawled through brick by brick for the past two years. It was as if somebody had stolen our mistress." This telling statement exposed AMT's basic internal weakness: none of the company's three top administrators was willing to delegate authority.

Christopher Manos for several years was Municipal Theater. He had been the first year-round employee the city had hired for Theater Under the Stars. When the Center opened, he had had fifteen years of theatrical experience, eight of them in Atlanta. He was thirty-seven years old. The general manager in charge of administration, Dennis Gibbs, came to the theater as a stage manager in 1963. Barely out of his teens, he had worked with a musical theater and a cabaret theater in Illinois. In 1966 Michael Parver was hired. He had co-produced in 1962, at the age of twenty-five, a successful off-Broadway musical, acted as associate producer that same year

on a Broadway play starring Charles Boyer, and worked as the general manager of the Mineola, Papermill, and Westport Country Playhouses. Manos, Gibbs, and Parver formed a management triumvirate, handling every detail when AMT was a small operation. As they built the organization into a four-company combine with a staff which grew to over 200, they found themselves reluctant to let go, to give up the complete control they exercised. Although they sought advice from the best sources they could find (Mary Jolliffe on publicity, the Ford Foundation's Danny Newman and Hugh Southern of the Theatre Development Commission on season subscription sales), if it failed to jibe with their own plans or opinions, they refused to follow it.

No department head had his budget in writing except the set designer, Richard Gullicksen, an old TUTS man. Every decision and expenditure had to be passed by Manos, Parver, or Gibbs, or by some combination of the three. "Every time we needed an air mail stamp, we had to clear it with Michael," said Lineberger. "I spent my whole time with AMT trying to design a letterhead. When I came, it was the first thing they set me to do, and when I left, it still had not been done. Chris and Michael couldn't get together with their board and decide whose name they wanted to go where."[81] (A request for "letterhead approval" appears on a memo from Mary Jolliffe to

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[81] James Lineberger, head of publicity, Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., interview in Atlanta, Georgia, February 5, 1969.

to administration and publicity personnel dated May 13, 1968.)[82] "Manos and Parver even wanted to stipulate what color the advertising literature should be," added Al Braselton, who handled the AMT account for Scofield, Braselton, and Williams.[83] "The internal workings of AMT," summarized Lineberger, "were a constant battle over who runs what that was never ironed out. As a result, energy which should have gone for major projects was dissipated in inconsequentials. Here we were sitting around arguing about a goddamn letterhead, when what we should have been doing was trying to figure out a way to survive."[84]

Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., had grown in eight years from Christopher Manos to over 200 employees, but its three managers were loath to let any aspect of its operation slip from their control. As a result, the AMT which opened in the Center was still being run like Theater Under the Stars. The methods took their toll.

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[82] Memo calling a meeting of publicity and administrative staff members of the Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., for May 18, 1968. Issued May 13, 1968, by Mary Jolliffe to all involved.

[83] Al Braselton, advertising account exective for Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., interview in Atlanta, Georgia, March 3, 1969.

[84] Lineberger, interview.

15. The 'Big Bully' Image

AMT had needed not only an efficient publicity campaign, but a public relations crusade as well. Its image in the community was not favorable. Long the only professional theater company in the city, Municipal came to appear, next to Atlanta's avocational groups, as the "big bully" in the arts.[85] While the now defunct Pocket Theatre, the still struggling Academy Theatre, and a pre-professional Theatre Atlanta were leading a precarious existence trying to keep their deficits down, their audiences up, and still offer provocative productions, AMT drew full houses and emerged after each season triumphantly in the black.

AMT did not understand or respect the spirit of cooperation which prevails in Atlanta's theatrical community even among competitors. "They lacked humility," said J. Lee Friedman, president of the Atlanta Music Club and reputedly one of the biggest producers in the Southeast. "In this business, you have to cooperate. AMT wouldn't do it. I wanted to rent the Alliance Theater for five nights in the 1968-69 season. They only made six dates available to me. They wouldn't bend. Everybody has to bend a little. For example, I wouldn't book José Iturbi into the Civic Center on the

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[85] Bruce Galphin, editorial associate, Atlanta Constitution, interview in Atlanta, Georgia, February 6, 1969.

night of an Atlanta Symphony concert. I would trounce them. And that's bad business. We all have to make a living in the performing arts in this town."[86*]

When Theatre Atlanta went professional, some theater observers felt AMT was deliberately trying to harrass the company. At one point the two theaters came into direct conflict over the rights to The Hostage. TA, deep in deficit spending, had advertised the play as part of its 1967-68 season. Jay Broad, the director, had received a verbal confirmation of the rights from Samuel French and Company, and had begun rehearsals and set construction. Then Manos informed Broad that he had a written contract for The Hostage on his desk at AMT. He would give the rights to Theatre Atlanta, he said, if Michael Howard didn't want to do it. Then followed a period of several days in which Manos tried to reach Howard, who was fishing off the New England coast. When Howard's answer came back, he did want The Hostage to start his season in the Center. TA was left with some $5,000 in unnecessary expenditures and a gap just a week away in its repertory schedule.

When Theatre Atlanta was forced to conduct a $50,000 crisis fund drive in late August, 1968, the public took a look down the street at a seemingly affluent AMT ensconced

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[86] J. Lee Friedman, interview.

* Friedman was a member of AMT's Board of Trustees.

in the Arts Center with what appeared to be at least the moral support of the "fat cat" Arts Alliance. They drew their own conclusions, predominantly that the complex was monopolizing the resources which had formerly been distributed among the various arts organizations. AMT, through its association with the Arts Alliance in the Center, came to look like a villian. Michael Howard's radio spots on behalf of Theatre Atlanta's needs seemed only a cruel irony.

Theatre Atlanta in 1967 took a giant step in leading Atlantans to the theater with the presentation of Barbara Garson's Macbird. The production filled the theater, even on week-nights, with a new, young, movie-oriented audience, composed largely of students. TA cemented relations with this audience by offering them such fare as The Mad Show, Beyond the Fringe, and the highly successful Red, White, and Maddox. Their loyalty remained with Theatre Atlanta, and they shunned AMT, the Arts Alliance, the Arts Center, and their "Establishment" atmosphere.

The Center came to be regarded, long before its opening, as "the capital of the 'ins' by the 'outs.'"[87] "Neighbors insist, 'I wouldn't walk across the street to visit the Center,'" wrote one observer after AMT folded. "Others are unclear about what it is people get all dressed up to go and

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[87] Jack Spalding, "The Arts Center--A Friendly Place" (editorial), Atlanta Journal, March 21, 1968, p. 22.

see."[88] Although the Atlanta Arts Alliance had changed the name of the "Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center" to the "Atlanta Memorial Arts Center" in late 1967, the building never did escape the image of a "temple of Mammon,"[89] "a shrine."[90]

Thus, while most of Atlanta did not consider the Arts Center, and consequently, AMT, as something they would be interested in, many of the city's theater followers, who compose the core of theater audiences, had an unfavorable image of AMT. The latter regarded the combine as either a big fish who dined off the little fish in its pond, or as an opportunistic climber among drama groups, a "Johnny come lately" which had parlayed a knack for presenting shallow comedies and "name" stars into a position in the Arts Center as the city's reigning performing company. Such feelings, while they probably would not keep a habitual theater-goer from attending a production, were not conducive to enthusiastic word-of-mouth regarding the shows. It is word-of-mouth which pulls in the "maybes" and can make or break a theatrical production, particularly an unfamiliar one, in Atlanta.

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[88] Reg Murphy, "Cultural Supermarket Being Created Now" (editorial), Atlanta Journal, March 21, 1968, p. 22.

[89] Jack Spalding, "The Arts Center--A Friendly Place."

[90] Reg Murphy, "Cultural Supermarket Being Created Now."

IV. Aftermath

"The Alliance Resident Theater Company--theater for everyone."

--The Alliance Resident Theater Company advertising brochure, February, 1969.

After the debacle, Atlanta's cultural leaders picked up the pieces. The ballet company reverted to civic status and raised the money to complete its season with the remaining performances of Repertoire Number Two and Swan Lake. With a $15,000 grant from the state's emergency fund and the help of energetic Junior League workers who collected additional funds, the Atlanta Children's Theater finished its season. Its director plans to remain in Atlanta and continue the company. Blanche Thebom is investigating the possibility of forming a regional opera company in conjunction with the University of Georgia. Manos convinced the Bureau of Internal Revenue that his only remaining assets were his talents as a producer and began readying another season of Theater of the Stars, managing to raise some $45,000 within the community, with the intention of paying the IRS the $78,000 he owes them in withholding taxes out of his profits. And the Atlanta Arts Alliance got into the theater business.

16. The Atlanta Arts Alliance Gets Into The Theater Business

Three weeks after AMT collapsed, the Atlanta Arts Alliance formed the Alliance Resident Theater Company, composed of fourteen members of the original Atlanta Repertory Theater Company with Michael Howard as artistic director. The purpose of the company was primarily to honor with performances the season tickets held for the Atlanta Repertory Theater and the Atlanta Opera Companies. Its contract with the Alliance expired May 31, 1969. Some $50,000 was raised for the project through a fund drive and the Atlanta Arts Alliance met ARTC's additional budget expenses of $164,000. You Can't Take It With You, The Little Foxes, Major Barbara, and Twelfth Night were scheduled for production. The Alliance printed a brochure proclaiming ARTC as a "theater for everyone"[91] and priced tickets at $2.50 and $3.50, with student rates at $1.75. (Tickets to Atlanta Repertory Theater productions had cost $4.50 and $5.50, with students at half price.) Anyone who came to the box office on Tuesday evenings and said he'd never seen a play before was admitted free.

Michael Howard declared he had not had a clear picture of Atlanta audiences when he planned his ARTC season, described his new choices as "good, solid classics of their kind, fine

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[91]The Alliance Resident Theater Company advertising brochure, February, 1969.

plays for actors," and urged people to come see them in their shirtsleeves. Alliance president Charles Jagels hailed the selections as "plays anybody coming to the theater for the first time would enjoy." You Can't Take It With You was faulted mildly in local reviews. Critics privately agreed it was one of the worst productions they'd seen. The Great Speckled Bird, Atlanta's underground newspaper, called ARTC a case of "Atlanta businessmen 'fulfilling' a 'commitment' to 'theater' with so and so many yards of shoddy."[92] The audience underwent a change. Some people really did come in shirtsleeves and a few had small children in tow. It began to look a little like the old Theater Under the Stars crowd again. And on the first "free Tuesday" some 75 people were admitted to their first play, including a busload of some 40 black children on a school-sponsored jaunt.

Although the plays were well on the conservative side of standard repertory fare and pretty badly performed at that, the Alliance Resident Theater Company was trying to reach out to a broader community, something the various performing groups of Atlanta Municipal Theater had not done. Members of the Alliance were mindful of the 25,000 persons per week who came to see Arthur and were beginning to realize the importance of having a resident theater company in the Center. They were thinking seriously of forming their own the next year. While not the best of all possible solutions, such an

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[92] Morris Brown, "You Can't Take It With You" (review), Great Speckled Bird (March 11, 1969), p. 13.

arrangement would be infinitely better than no theater at all, particularly since the Alliance seems to be conscious of its responsibilities toward a broader audience.

17. What Might Have Been and What Could Be

The Atlanta Municipal Theater was not the best choice as a producing organization to fill the Alliance Theater in the Arts Center. One promising possibility would have been the formation of an entirely new theater group by the Arts Alliance, which would be a member of the Alliance, as well as a constituent of the Center. The company should have had an artistic director trained in classic as well as contemporary acting styles. (Michael Howard, an alumnus of the Actor's Studio, had had little or no training in any but naturalistic acting techniques, nor had many of his acting company, most of them his former students. An artistic director who is well-known and established in national theater circles would have been preferable, in order to balance the reputation of Robert Shaw as conductor of the Symphony and not make the theater troupe look like a poor cousin. In the event that the artistic director did not have a national reputation, it would have been doubly important that his background be versatile and his work impressive.

The Atlanta Civic Ballet should have been built into a professional company as a part of the Arts Alliance and

should have shared the 1,800-seat auditorium with the Atlanta Symphony. The Symphony could have provided music for the ballet company. Robert Shaw should then have been permitted to present operas as a part of his symphony season, if he desired, in the larger house.

The Atlanta Arts Alliance should remain a fund-raising organization, exercising no artistic control over its member companies other than the selection of artistic directors. Fund-raising for all the organizations which would comprise the Alliance ought to have been conducted in one united appeal for the arts in the Center.

But this condition is, at present, unattainable. The Alliance has nearly exhausted its fund sources in the construction of the Center, the conversion of the Symphony to full professional status, and the expansion of the art school and museum. It should not, at this time, assume further responsibilities. Theater and ballet could be added later. Considering the growing income gap in the performing arts, the Alliance might well decide to stay out of theater and ballet altogether and bring in revenues from the Alliance Theater by booking touring shows into it.

Since the Alliance was unwilling to expand by forming a theater group, and since a group was desired for the Center at the outset, then the Atlanta Municipal Theater did appear to fill the need. Having once chosen this course, the Alliance should not have looked upon AMT as a stopgap measure, an excuse for "postponing a decision about what to do with

the theater"[93] for two or three years. It should have embraced AMT wholeheartedly, taking it in as a member, or not have admitted the organization into the Center at all. The Woodruff Foundation should have taken a stand and forced the issue, when it became apparent that the Alliance was straddling the fence by renting its theater to AMT but not offering the company the security of membership.

Had it been admitted to the Arts Alliance, AMT could and should have conducted its operations differently. In the first place, the organization would have been solvent on entering the Center. But several other alterations in the master plan should have been made. Manos should have given up his idea for an opera company. Someone like Blanche Thebom could be engaged by the Alliance to take care of the staging aspect of any operas presented, but the music would be entirely in the charge of Robert Shaw. Opera, then, would be completely under the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's control, rather than having Shaw simply "provide the music" for an AMT production. AMT might thus shed some of its administrative burden. Although such an arrangement would mean for Manos the sacrifice of part of his dream, if it calmed troubled waters with Shaw, it would still have stood in Manos' favor.

Then Manos would have been free to concentrate on his theater and ballet companies. He should not have stinted in selecting an artistic director for the former. The theater company was the backbone of AMT in the Center, presenting

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[93]Goodwin, interview.

twice as many productions as either the opera or ballet companies and twice as many performances as the two combined. The Atlanta Repertory Theater Company had by far the largest budget and was to be responsible for bringing in the largest percentage of revenues. It was the wrong place to cut corners. Manos had his heart set on Michael Howard to head the theater company, but he had, at one stage, negotiated with producer-director John Houseman to serve as over-all artistic coordinator of the various companies. Plans with Houseman either fell through or were abandoned when Manos discovered he could obtain both Blanche Thebom for opera and David Blair for ballet. It was a serious mistake, however, to leave the theater company without a strong leader. AMT management could then have launched an advertising and promotional campaign to familiarize the public with the artistic directors and, more importantly, with the upcoming productions.

Since opera would be presented as part of the Atlanta Symphony season, AMT would not need a <u>King Arthur</u> to open three companies simultaneously in the Center. It was a bad choice for a debut--an unfamiliar form of theater with the inherent risk of alienating the many who did not understand it or the "camp" style in which it was presented. Reviewers ended up praising the staging and the event, unable to separate the qualities of the individual companies. The audience, it may be assumed, reacted likewise. AMT should have opened with a dramatic work and a new ballet on successive evenings, thereby stressing the importance of the presentations and

eliminating the creation of one mammoth event.

These plans seem simple and logical in retrospect. At the time they should have been attampted, however, the principals involved all had their heads in the clouds and their eyes on other concerns. Manos was thinking of the grandeur of his dream instead of realistically implementing it. The city's business leaders only wanted to bring some "culture" to the town. They did not take a hard look at its costs or operational intricacies.

Now everyone has been burned, and a healthier, more practical outlook prevails. The Alliance is reconsidering a theater company, but this time as an integral part of the Center. Before this step is taken, both a competent artistic director and an experienced administrative manager must be found. The Alliance must then give this fledgling company its full support and together they should begin methodically to build an audience--through advertising, personal contact, and just plain enthusiasm. Most importantly, the theater company must never be regarded by the Alliance or anyone else as inferior in any way to the orchestra or the museum-art school complex. For the various art forms in the Center to stimulate each other and, hence, the community, they must exist on an equal footing.

For the Center to work, it must attract a broad spectrum of the city through its doors. This can only be done by reaching out to these people--the urban poor, the "new yeomanry" of lower-middle-class wage-earners, the students,

the housewives, the workers in technical professions. By proclaiming the Alliance Resident Theater Company a "theater for everyone" and offering free performances for those uninitiated in play-going, the Alliance has taken a few halting steps in the right direction. And there have been some results. Audiences for ARTC productions have undergone a subtle change from the ones which attended AMT productions in the Center. They are less knowing, slightly ill at ease. They won't be pleasing to those who go to the theater to feel themselves among the "beautiful people." But they are the ones who must be won. The Alliance has shown it can at least get on the right track in appealing to the public. It is to be hoped that this is the beginning of a sustained program.

Atlantans deserve a second chance to have professional performing groups in their city. Mistakes were made the first time; everyone can now profit from them. If the lessons have been learned, then the brief existence of the Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center was not without value.

Glossary

Alliance Resident Theater Company (Alliance Resident Theater, ARTC): Theater company formed by the Atlanta Arts Alliance after the collapse of the Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc.

Alliance Theater: The 868-seat theater in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center which Atlanta Municipal Theater rented from the Atlanta Arts Alliance.

Atlanta Art Association (Art Association): Board of directors of the Atlanta Art School and the Atlanta Art Museum; one of the components of the Atlanta Arts Alliance.

Atlanta Art Museum (Atlanta Museum of Art, High Museum of Art): Component of the Atlanta Art Association.

Atlanta Arts Alliance (the Arts Alliance, the Alliance): Governing organization of the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center; composed of the Atlanta Symphony Guild and the Atlanta Art Association; formed in 1965.

Atlanta Civic Center (Civic Center): Complex including an exhibition hall and a 4,500-seat auditorium; entirely separate from Atlanta Memorial Arts Center, different location; rented by Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., for Theater of the Stars.

Atlanta Memorial Arts Center (Atlanta Arts Center, the Arts Center, the Center, the Cultural Center, the Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center): Building housing the Atlanta Museum of Art, the Atlanta School of Art, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and, as a tenant, Atlanta Municipal Theater in the Alliance Theater; name changed from Atlanta Memorial Cultural Center in 1967.

Atlanta Municipal Auditorium (Municipal Auditorium): Still operative structure which the Atlanta Civic Center was intended to replace.

Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc. (Atlanta Municipal Theater, Municipal Theater, Inc., Municipal Theater, Municipal, AMT): Producing organization which included the Atlanta Repertory Theater Company, Atlanta Opera Company, Atlanta Ballet Company, and Atlanta Children's Theater; operating in the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center's Alliance Theater.

Atlanta Repertory Theater Company (Atlanta Repertory Theater, ART): Component of Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc.

Glossary (cont'd.)

Atlanta Symphony Guild: Board of directors of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; component of Atlanta Arts Alliance.

Theater of the Stars: See Theater Under the Stars.

Theater Under the Stars (TUTS): Season of summer musicals presented by Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc.; became Theater of the Stars in 1968, upon moving from the Chastain Park Amphitheater to the Atlanta Civic Center Auditorium.

Theatre Atlanta (TA): Resident professional theater company performing in repertory; only professional rival of Atlanta Municipal Theater's Atlanta Repertory Theater.

Winter Play Season (WPS): Season of winter stock presented by Atlanta Municipal Theater, Inc., in the Women's Club Playhouse.

Women's Club Playhouse (Atlanta Women's Club Playhouse, Women's Club Auditorium): 700-seat auditorium of Atlanta Women's Club.

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